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FM AMEMBASSY YEREVAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8423
INFO RUEHRN/USMISSION UN ROME 0002
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 0086
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0152
RUEHFR/USMISSION UNESCO PARIS 0001

C O N F I D E N T I A L YEREVAN 001012

SIPDIS

IO/UNESCO (KSIEKMAN)

//// C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - ADDED PREL TAG ////

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/15/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNESCO](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: ARMENIA TO BACK EGYPT'S CULTURE MINISTER FOR
UNESCO DG

REF: STATE 130916

Classified By: DCM Joseph Pennington for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (C) Acting Pol-Econ Chief delivered reftel demarche on December 16 to Tziunik Aghajanian, Director of International Organizations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Aghajanian said Armenia has long committed to supporting the candidacy of Egyptian Culture Minister Farouk Hosni to be the next UNESCO Director General.

¶2. (C) Armenia did so for two reasons, according to Aghajanian: a) to maintain positive bilateral relations with a key Arab state where Armenia has a large and vibrant Diaspora and ample cultural heritage; and b) to support diverse regional candidates for the post. When asked to reconsider Armenia's position, Aghajanian replied that while sensitive to the United States' contrarian views of Hosni, this was a case where Egyptian diplomacy was way out in front very early on. She stated that the Egyptians had contacted Armenia on this issue as far back as 2007, before she assumed her position. Aghajanian said Armenia would not change its position now, and that it had also been approached by the Bulgarians in September to support their candidate, which they also had to decline.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: As post has previously reported on various occasions, the GOAM is traditionally quite conservative in its diplomacy with the Arab world, given the fact of its large Diaspora in the Middle East and Yerevan being loathe to draw unwanted attention to Christian Armenians residing there. In the case of Egypt, Armenia boasts an active and prominent Diaspora in Cairo and Alexandria. The GOAM's support for Egypt in general could also be a reflection of the fact that Egypt was one of the first Arab countries -- actually, one of the first countries worldwide -- to establish diplomatic relations with Armenia after the latter declared independence in 1991. END COMMENT.

YOVANOVITCH